

Star Wars: Shadowbound Chapter 3 - Arenval's Warning, Qui-Gon's Request, Breaking Free & Dark Side Seduction

"He's very strong in the Force."

"That he is, Aren. Master Jinn wishes to teach him, but I do not know whether the Council will approve," Obi-Wan said, arms crossed and leaning against the wall. "He is too old."

Arenval didn't stop looking at the boy, as the boy did the same in silence. "The Council approved taking me."

"You were an infant."

"One oozing with the Dark Side. Compared to me, this one's just a kid scarred by circumstances. I feel the darkness, but it's rooted in emotion, not biology," Arenval said as he crouched down to the boy's level. "What's your name?"

"I'm Anakin. And you are?"

"I'm Arenval Tython, Padawan to Grandmaster Yoda, but you can call me Aren," Arenval said, unsure what else to do as he rested a hand on the boy's shoulder. "Tell me, do you fear losing your loved ones?"

"Aren, I don't think you shoul—"

Arenval waved a hand, cutting off Obi-Wan. "Answer me, Anakin. They'll ask you that in there. And believe me, they don't take kindly to fear. The bald one especially, will peer into your soul as if you owe him credits."

Obi-Wan held back a chuckle on the side.

"I-I... miss her."

Arenval nodded, able to feel the thoughts and emotions swirling in the boy's mind. "You love her?"

"Very much." Anakin nodded his head.

"Not good. The Council tends to frown on attachments. Isn't that so, Obi-Wan?"

"That is true." Obi-Wan nodded. "Emotions, yet pe—"

Just as Obi-Wan started to recite the Jedi Code, Arenval smirked. "I wonder how Mandalore is doing these days."

"..."

With a soft chuckle, Arenval rose and straightened his robes. "Don't worry, and relax, Anakin. You'll make Jedi one way or another. As for your mother, I suspect the Force already has its own ideas. I should head inside now, don't want another one of Master Windu's 'you're late' lectures."

Finally, Arenval turned, steadying his emotions and facial expressions, and practiced the Force stealth ability he had learned from Master Dooku. He hadn't mastered it yet to hide himself entirely, but it was enough to not put other Force sensitives around him on their toes.

The twin gates hissed open then, and he walked past the two guardians. The sunset light bathed the entire chamber, and all masters were present in their seats. In the middle, however, stood Master Qui-Gon Jinn alone, hands together in sleeves.

Tension?

Even though the Jedi Masters were supposed to always be calm, when twelve of them sat together, it wasn't hard for him to feel even the slightest hint of negative emotions. There was worry, he could tell. And they were trying their best to overcome it.

"My apologies for taking a while. There was quite an interesting boy outside," Arenval said politely and bowed to the Council. Being Yoda's Padawan had its own benefits; he at least got heard more now.

"Hmm, think of him, what do you?" Yoda asked with a curious hum.

Arenval gave a casual shrug, unfazed by his old master's presence after years in his shadow. "He's strong. Strong enough to give any of us a rather embarrassing day, if he trains right. But I feel the life he's lived has left him scarred. Even so, nothing the Order can't heal."

"We will test him after this," spoke the long-headed Cerean, Ki-Adi-Mundi. "We are informed that you had a Force vision recently regarding Master Jinn?"

Dickhead. Yeah, I'll call him that privately.

There were a few reasons why Arenval didn't like Ki-Adi-Mundi. The reasons weren't just limited to his hypocritical, dismissive, and arrogant nature, but by the very fact that the man was allowed on the Jedi Council. For one, Ki-Adi-Mundi was still just a Jedi Knight, without an apprentice yet, was allowed into the Jedi Order at an older age, and was allowed to have multiple wives and children. The man was a walking bundle of exceptions.

Arenval nodded and glanced at Master Jinn standing right beside him. The man gave him a warm smile back.

"I did, as I told Master Plo Koon. I saw Master Jinn's... death on Naboo. He fought a red-skinned Zabrak wielding a red lightsaber." Arenval repeated what he'd already told Master Koon. "It all happened quickly... There was a droid army advancing."

"Can you describe this Zabrak to me, Aren?" Master Jinn asked him.

"Red skin. Black tattoos across his face. Horns, a lot of them, almost like a crown. His eyes looked like mine. His lightsaber was unusual. Double-bladed. That's all I remember."

Master Jinn nodding towards Yoda.

"Is it a Sith Lord?" Arenval asked since no one was speaking.

"That seems unlikely," said the long-necked Yarael Poof.

"The Sith are extinct," added Ki-Adi-Mundi.

Arenval frowned, wondering if the longhead had just repeated that line again. But he said nothing; it seemed to him that the entire council was unwilling to discuss the topic of the Sith. Still, he made sure they noticed that he had something to say.

"On your mind, something is, my Padawan?" Yoda inquired right away.

Arenval said nothing for a moment and looked down, as if carefully measuring his words. "I find the Council's line of thought flawed, Master Yoda."

"Padawan Tython, be caref—"

"Continue." Yoda interrupted Master Windu.

"I don't know a great deal about the Sith, my Master. I only know they follow the dark side. But if that's the case, how can they be extinct? Sith is not a species. It's an ideology, and ideologies do not go extinct. It only fades. What fades can return given time and a catalyst. The Jedi Order has faced destruction before, according to the histories I've read, yet the Jedi recovered. Similarly, I stand before you..."

Arenval stopped using the Force Stealth entirely so they could feel his Force alignment.

"If I can exist, why not the Sith? Failing to see something doesn't prove it isn't real. It may only be hidden, biding its time. In my experience, if things can go wrong, they usually do. So I prepare for the worst and hope for the best, so I'm never taken by surprise."

This was Arenval's last-ditch attempt at saving the Jedi Order. If they learned anything from his words and sent another Master with Master Jinn to Naboo, things would probably come out differently. If Master Jinn lived and taught Anakin, the probability of a Darth Vader appearing would be reduced. In time, he'd then be able to target the Chancellor.

I tried. At least.

Finally, Arenval noticed a difference in their expressions. Master Koon, Yaddle, and Yoda nodded to him, while the likes of Ki-Adi-Mundi and Mace Windu either frowned or shook their heads.

"Meditate on this, we must. Tired you must be, my Padawan. Rest today, you should," Yoda responded, dismissing him.

That was the best kind of response one could expect from the Council. At least they didn't outright reject him.

Silently, he bowed his head and took a step back.

"Aren."

Suddenly, he heard Master Jinn call for him, so he looked back.

"Will you wait for me outside? There is something I wish to discuss with you."

"Of course, Master." Arenval bowed again and left the council chamber for good.

As he arrived outside, he heard Obi-Wan and Anakin in a heated discussion already.

"Aren!" Anakin voiced. "Is it true? You beat Obi-Wan?"

Arenval smirked. "I did, Anakin. Why? Let me guess. He said I relied on tricks?"

"You did use tricks. And it was a tie," Obi-Wan insisted.

"I used the Force."

"The aspect I know nothing of."

"Not my problem." Arenval shrugged and turned to leave. Teasing Obi-Wan had become one of life's simpler pleasures. "Do try to relax. They'll call the kid in soon."

Instead of waiting right there, he went down the spire through a turbolift and arrived in the larger hall from where multiple pathways connected to the rest of the temple. The massive building was a maze to him, most of which he wasn't even allowed to see.

There, he found a corner and just leaned against a wall and closed his eyes to wait while meditating. He truly hoped the Council would listen to him and change things. But he knew he couldn't count on it either.

It was almost half an hour later when he sensed someone getting closer. He opened his eyes and saw Master Qui-Gon Jinn, and behind him, Obi-Wan was taking Anakin away somewhere.

"Walk with me, Aren. It seems our conversation must continue on the move. The Council has dispatched me to Naboo to uncover the enemy."

Arenval shifted and walked beside the older man, following him. "Just you? I hoped they would send another Master with you."

"You have no faith in my abilities, Padawan?"

"What? No, I did..." Arenval caught the smile on the man's face and shook his head. "I hoped to bring a change to my vision. You going alone changes nothing. Someone like Master Windu should have accompanied you. Someone capable of fighting a darksider."

Before Master Jinn could speak, they arrived in one of the many hangars of the Jedi temple. There, a Jedi shuttle bus waited for them; Obi-Wan and Anakin were waiting inside. Arenval fully expected Master Jinn to stop and finish talking.

But instead, Master Jinn continued and stepped inside the transporter, stood at its door, and looked back at him.

"Master, I'm not allowed to leave the Temple without the Council's permission," Arenval reminded the man.

"You can return in this same shuttle bus. Come. We're only going to the Naboo Starship's landing pad."

Arenval frowned. Just as expected from the maverick Jedi. For once, he looked behind, imagining Windu standing there with arms crossed and shaking his head in disappointment.

Fuck it. I'll warn him as much as I can.

He turned and walked into the shuttle bus. The door hissed closed behind him, and soon they were flying. They didn't talk, however, and it was an extremely short ride. In less than ten minutes, they deboarded on the floating landing pad of the Naboo Starship.

They sure love chrome.

Arenval stared at the shining ship in awe. It was beautiful, pointy, and he knew it was also very fast.

I should get Alfred and T-7 to find me a fast shi... wait a minute, I think I can just steal one.

While he walked around the ship, he heard Master Jinn and Obi-Wan bicker about Anakin's fate. But eventually, Master Jinn sent his Padawan into the ship.

"Let me guess. The Council refused to train Anakin?" he asked, finally approaching Master Jinn. "Why? They accepted me."

"The Council feels that too many exceptions cease to be exceptions at all. And they do not look kindly upon the darkness that dwells in young Ani's mind," Master Jinn said. "Even so, he will be trained as a Jedi. I have no doubt of it. It was the will of the Force that I found him. But... if the worst should come to pass, I hope you can help him."

Huh? Me? The Sithspawn?

"What can I do? I can barely help myself."

"You have changed, Aren," Master Jinn said, facing him directly. "You no longer drift without direction. There is greater wisdom in you now, and strength as well. In the Council Chamber, I could hardly sense you unless I made the effort to seek you out. Your time on Brentaal has served you well."

"More than fruitful, Master," he agreed. "I've learned a great deal about engineering, myself, and about the Force. But I'm still only a drop in the ocean. All I've truly done is sharpen my senses, refine my lightsaber work, and bury myself in books."

"You do not have to run from yourself, Aren." Master Jinn placed a hand on his shoulder, meeting his gaze. "I have watched you grow, from the boy in that dining hall to the Jedi you are now. I have known few who possess your strength in confronting and restraining the darkness within."

"When you first came to the Temple, the Council had its doubts. Even my own Master shared them. Yet you proved them wrong, just as I believed you would."

It was at that moment Arenval realised how long Master Jinn had been paying attention to him. Why he always put time and effort into meeting him, even training him on occasions, and even sending Obi-Wan to spar with him. It was all because the man simply had faith in him.

"Why do you believe in me?" Arenval asked bluntly.

"Master Dooku once took me to see you when you were a baby, perhaps a week after you arrived at the Temple. When I held you, I knew you were meant for something far greater than any of us could foresee. That is the will of the Force."

Of course, you would say that.

"What if I fall to the Dark Side?" Arenval asked.

"Then you shall overcome it. You have been doing so since the day you were born, Padawan. That is why I ask you to help Anakin. In time, he will face the darkness within him and seek answers. I hope you can guide him in the right direction when he does."

Arenval stared into the man's eyes. There was sincerity, and a strange confidence mixed with trust. What he had done to gain that trust, he didn't know. But at the same time, he couldn't

bring himself to accept those compliments. He knew himself the best, and the things he'd done on Brentaal.

"I'm not the man you think I am, Master,"

"No one is, Aren. There is darkness within everyone. What matters is whether you allow it to guide your actions. Until now, I have not seen you fail in that regard. I have faith, no matter the path you choose, even if one riddled with darkness, you will rise above it."

Arenval allowed his true expression to be revealed: a deep frown.

"You trust me too much, Master."

"Because it is the will of the Force."

Arenval went speechless at that point. No matter what, Master Jinn's answer was the same. It was blind trust in the Force, and following it. It was something not even the Council members did, as they always tried to stick to the Jedi Code.

In the end, he sighed and relented. "I'm not even sure of my own future, Master. But I will try. If Anakin comes to me, I will try to guide him."

"That puts my heart at ease." Master Jinn moved his hand away. "It is time you return."

"Don't use Form IV," Arenval started suddenly. "It will be a battle of stamina. His style is aggressively unconventional by Jedi standards. He'll want you chasing him, stretching the fight as long as he can. Be wary of the double-bladed lightsaber, but target the hilt. And don't let the droids distract you or Obi-Wan."

Master Jinn was silent for a long moment before speaking. "You believe the blockade and this Sith are related?"

"I don't believe it, Master. I know it. I've done little besides read for the better part of my life. It's a classic Sith tactic. Sow chaos on a large scale, keep the Jedi busy, and hide their true schemes in the confusion."

Right then, the hum of engines got closer, and soon a shuttle docked near the edge of the landing pad. From the opening doors appeared the delegation from Naboo, the Queen at the front.

"Please don't die on Naboo, Master Jinn. The consequences would ripple out to billions across the galaxy," Arenval said quickly before the delegation came closer.

"I will heed your words, Aren. The Force shall guide me, no matter the path."

The Force. Always the damn Force.

Having said all he wanted, he stepped aside as the delegation reached them. Master Jinn bowed his head politely.

"Your Majesty, it is our pleasure..."

Arenval didn't bother listening to them and instead stared at the ship, wondering if he could commission Naboo to make one for him later. Tython Tech had nothing but credits sitting in the bank anyway.

"Aren... Aren?"

Arenval halted his train of thought at Master Jinn's voice and looked back, and walked over to the delegation. The first one he looked at was the Queen. While he knew she was a beautiful woman, it was hard to tell at the moment with that clown makeup.

"Her Majesty was asking about you," Master Jinn said.

Taking the cue, Arenval quickly extended his right hand. For a second, the Queen of Naboo looked at his hand in return, remaining stiffly still.

He quickly withdrew his hand, thoughts tangled with the future ahead. He offered a brief bow. "It's a pleasure to meet you, Queen Amidala. I'm Arenval Tython."

"Arenval is Grandmaster Yoda's Padawan," Master Jinn added. It had an effect as the name of Yoda earned attention. Padme, her bodyguard, and her handmaidens all stared at him.

"Grandmaster's Padawan?" Padme voiced with a muse.

"That I am. I should return now. Have a safe journey home, Your Majesty. I have a feeling our paths will cross again soon. Once the Naboo crisis has been resolved, of course," Arenval said, not without purpose. He just wanted to leave a lasting impression on the troubled Queen's mind.

"You believe the Federation will end the blockade?" She asked him with a curious flare to her purposefully strange voice.

Arenval folded his arms, mirroring Master Jinn. "Not without a war, I'm afraid. The Federation has committed too much to walk away now. Still, I'm confident Naboo will prevail. Assuming you can persuade the Gungans to stand with you."

This is funny.

He just smiled at the shocked faces of Padme and her delegation.

"You know a lot about Naboo," Padme said, sounding a little more herself.

"I like to read," Arenval replied and stepped aside to clear the path. He glanced at Master Jinn then. "May the Force be with you."

"And also with you, Aren."

Finally, he watched them all board the ship. Moments later, it took off, leaving him alone on that large pad. Behind him, the shuttle bus was waiting for him.

Back to the prison.

As he walked towards the shuttle, he looked in the direction of the Senate office building. He didn't even try to sense anything; he just knew the Dark Lord was in there somewhere, most likely aware, or more.

I would be if I were him. A body of Dark Side, prime experiment material.

Soon, he boarded the shuttle and returned to the temple. He hoped nobody noticed his little trip, and since nobody confronted him, he just returned to his assigned Padawan quarters. T7 beeped, and Alfred glowed his eyes for a moment.

He said nothing to them and just lay down on his sleeping pad.

Sleep came quickly that night, too tired from the graduation on Brentaal, the return, and all that happened afterwards.

However, that night was not calm. Dreams troubled him in his sleep. A dream of Master Jinn dying on Naboo despite all he'd told. He saw Master Jinn fight differently, even slice Darth Maul from the waist. But it was too late; Maul's lightsaber had also stabbed Master Jinn. Both of them fell down the shaft in the end.

Just as Master Jinn's body vanished into that shaft, Arenval's eyes shot open, and he sat up. His breath was calm, but his body was coated in sweat.

Fucking Force! It just won't change!

Knock! Knock!

Of course.

Arenval waved at the door to open. As expected, Master Yoda stood there. That was the whole reason their rooms were adjacent.

Master Yoda stepped inside, and the door hissed closed behind him.

"Nightmare, hmm?"

"Master Jinn will die on Naboo, I'm absolutely sure of it. You should send someone to aid him, Master. There is yet time," Arenval begged, but didn't allow himself to sound as such.

He maintained that plastic facade of calm he'd gotten used to. But it still infuriated him. The inability to do anything despite knowing the future. The rigidity of the Order itself. It all made living there suffocating. The safety it provided him no longer outweighed his personal growth.

"Calm the mind, first you should."

Arenval shook his head, letting out a sharp breath. "What good will that do? Don't you see it, Master? How can you not? The Naboo crisis is only the first symptom of a sickness the galaxy has ignored for far too long. And this Sith... how do you not see the truth behind this chaos? It won't stop here. Separatism will keep gaining ground."

"Stop it, can you?"

Arenval looked down, shaking his head. "I'm confined to the limited Jedi knowledge I could master. I'm weak."

"With a lightsaber, strong you are."

"Because that's all I've done my entire life, Master."

"Meditate, you should, clouded the force is," Yoda said. "Lead to imbalance this will. Faith in Qui-Gon have. Offered a Council seat he was, refused he did. Wise and strong in the Force he is."

That alone can't change the future, Master.

But Arenval said nothing. He just crossed his legs and closed his eyes to meditate. He heard the door open and close soon after, Yoda's presence gone.

Yet meditation was the last thing he could do with so much on his mind.

It's time to leave.

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Three days later,

What's the point?

Arenval sat cross-legged not far from the Great Tree in the garden courtyard. It was serene, yet full of inner turmoil for him. Despite having informed the Council of the dangers, Master Qui-Gon Jinn couldn't survive. That dream he had nights ago turned out to be a true Force vision.

This wasn't the will of the Force. It was ignorance.

His face turned, his expressions twisted as he tried to focus and calm himself. But it proved harder than expected that day.

“Master Dooku.” He sensed the man near and opened his eyes. But he didn’t get up; he didn’t feel like doing it. This Dooku, before him, reeked of the Dark Side. To him, at least.

“They failed you too, have they not?” asked Dooku with a slow, pained voice.

“I warned them. I warned Master Jinn. Yet none of it mattered. What is the point of having visions if they are simply ignored?” Arenval asked.

Dooku stood beside him, staring at the Great Tree. “Qui-Gon Jinn had faith in you. If only the Council did too.”

Arenval stood up. “It matters not now.”

“Be careful, Padawan. Remain mindful. I have lost one pupil. I would not wish to lose another.”

He looked at the older man’s face in silence. The change was subtle between the Dooku of now and the one he remembered teaching him Force Stealth. Claws of Palpatine had dug into his flesh and the Force.

“I will not disappoint Master Jinn. I know the path before me, Master. Do you?” Arenval replied as he walked away. “May the Force be with you.”

He had no interest in listening to Dooku preach and maybe try to recruit him. He had better things to do. Life in the Jedi Temple had been frustrating, but safe and comfortable. It was time to leave that comfort zone.

He returned to his quarters and collected a small bag.

“Teeseven, use your old Jedi clearance to monitor who enters and leaves the Temple. Inform me the moment the members of the High Council return from Naboo.”

T7 beeped and whistled.

“T7 = Understand // T7 + Aren = On Mission.”

Arenval patted the droid’s head and looked at Alfred next. The protocol droid had now gained the personality of an actual butler, but with a hint of sarcasm at times.

“Alfred, begin preparations to move our funds out of Coruscant. Plan for the worst-case scenario. Trust no major banks, especially those tied to the Banking Clans. They’re in league with the enemy.”

“Your wish is my command, Sir.”

Finally, he tucked a smaller, custom-made holotab in his pocket. It was small, like the smartphones he remembered. He had built it, untraceable with features suited for stealth missions. It had a link with both T7 and Alfred.

Beep!

T7 chimed as he was leaving.

"May Force = with Aren!"

"And with you, my friend."

Arenval chuckled and left the quarters. The temple was silent that day; the death of Master Jinn was something that affected many in different ways. Master Jinn's habit of looking out for the odd ones in the Order had made many Padawans sad, as well as Masters.

Most of the Council had left, including the likes of Yoda and Windu, who kept an eye on him most of the time. And with both Aayla and Orbe off-world on missions, he had no distractions.

As usual, he took the turbolift and went down to the service level where storage vaults were located. Having visited that place over the years to grab some spare parts and other things for his projects, he knew plenty of people.

He went back to the droid storage, however, where that Twi'lek man worked. A bit of smooth-talking and a change of clothes later, he used the service exit and left the Jedi temple. He went to the nearest shuttle terminal and purchased a ticket for the underworld.

Arenval used Force Stealth as masterfully as he could and stepped inside the public shuttle. Moments later, it took him down through one of the underworld portals. It made a few stops here and there, and it took time, but eventually he arrived on Level 1313.

"You have checked my identification."

Arenval stealthily waved his hand in front of the officer manning the checkpoint.

"I have checked your identification."

He walked past the gate and entered the wider street. From the get-go, the stench was unbearable, but the residents were clearly used to it. There, the Dark Side was everywhere, in the form of misery. It was a hub of lawlessness, a source of all the illegal things one could desire.

Suffocating. Am I spoiled?

Natural sunlight could never reach that depth. Artificial light was the only means of illumination on the whole level. And eventually, as he entered narrow streets, he got to see a lot of illegal things firsthand.

Humanoids and non-humanoids sat together, taking drugs or overdosing on another. Clubs with dancing girls, Twi'leks, and others. Some were working the streets, inviting anyone with credits. Weapons were being exchanged. There were illegal industrial parts being sold.

Nobody stopped him in his tracks, however. He was draped in all black robes and a large hood covering his face in a shadow. His lightsaber was tucked inside his right sleeve.

Turn after turn, he walked through streets each worse than the one before. Each more lawless, less maintained, and never patrolled by any security. Eventually, he entered a tall, rundown building tilted towards one side. It was abandoned for that same reason.

Through the cracked staircase and jumping over the missing parts, he reached the top floor. It was all dark, but the Force guided him, and he stood in front of a door that had an electronic lock, still glowing.

He punched a code on it, and it hissed open.

As he entered, some lights turned on, but barely. Most of them were red, some were white, in a mix that cast a gloomy shadow in the rundown place.

It was all in ruin. He entered what seemed to be a living room. It had the most light, enough to see all the ruined furniture and appliances. The floor tiles were all cracked, most missing.

Crack!

Finally, he heard footsteps over broken tiles and saw a figure walk out of the nearest open door. She was a head shorter than him, with two curved lightsabers on her hips. Her form was slender, muscularly refined, with short spiky white hair.

An unnatural smile was curved on her lips as she came in front of him and... knelt on one knee.

"The preparations are complete, my master."

Arenval stared at her for a moment, still unsure how in the Force he had done it on Brentaal. Not only had he survived, but he had gained so much. He suspected that it was likely Palpatine, who indirectly leaked information about him to her.

Instead of recruiting me, she got recruited herself.

Her collar was high and stiff, flared up to the point it even covered the bottom of her jaw. He knew she hid scars with it. Her top was dark, backless, and form-fitting, shoulders exposed, a corset-like tight piece on her slim waist. Her sleeves were separate, only covering her forearms. Below, she only had a tight belt attached to that corset, to which a long, thin, dark, tattered loincloth dangled vertically, one in front and one in back. The rest were thigh-high, fitted black boots.

If I can fully win over her, I can win the rest.

"How many times must I tell you not to call me Master, Komari?" He firmly said, maintaining a stoic, serious face. It wasn't easy to act like an all-knowing Dark Lord to an actual dark side

user. Especially one who was more experienced and older. But knowing her weaknesses had helped.

Defying most common expectations, Komari Vosa looked up and smiled. Earning that smile had been slow progress on Brentaal, but the result was before him.

"You showed me the ways of the Force more than Dooku ever could. You are my only Master."

Arenval knew he had had to walk a thin line with her. She had lost her sanity to torture. Now a broken woman whose mind was corrupted by the Dark Side. Yet now, she was obsessed with him.

Thankfully, she was a Dark Jedi, not a Sith.

At least she's loyal.

Shaking his head, he stepped closer to her, held her by the pale shoulders, and made her rise. "The Order is filled with fools. I present them with prophetic visions, yet they refuse to believe in them."

"They are blind!" Komari burst out suddenly, fury blazing in her voice. "How could they not see, not heed your wisdom? They deserve death. All of them."

Arenval quickly moved each of his hands up and gripped her neck in a chokehold, but without any pressure. He stepped in closer then, a full head and more taller. His thumbs caressed her chin, where he could still feel a few scars.

That immediately made Komari silent. She just stared at his face with her yellow eyes painted dark, more dreamy than what suited a darksider. But she was like that.

"We have to do nothing. They are walking toward their own doom," he replied, still caressing her face, his palms now resting on either side of it. One thumb brushed across her thin, dark red lips.

Arenval didn't regret doing this, as this indirectly saved her. She was banished from the Jedi Order for her infatuation with her Master, Dooku. And he gave her just that: acceptance of her infatuation, an outlet, and reciprocation of her views on the Order, albeit less radical on his part. Combined with his knowledge of the Galaxy, Force, and abilities...

"Master..." Komari tilted her head backwards, as if melting against his touch.

Maybe I can help her.

The path Arenval had chosen to take scared him as well. He knew what the Dark Side was, but hadn't experienced it deeply. But remaining with the Jedi Order meant being a sitting duck for Palpatine to harvest later.

He quickly steeled his emotions, fooling his own mind. Then, he leaned down and... broke every rule of the Jedi code.

Arenval captured her lips in a soft kiss. A firm press of his mouth against hers, warm and unhurried like a quiet reward for her loyalty and hard work. No lustful hunger, just his breath brushing her skin as he lingered for a long second.

Komari melted instantly. A needy moan vibrated in her throat as her entire body sagged against him, knees weakening, eyes fluttering shut in delirious bliss. Her hands clutched desperately at his robes, her mind drowning in obsession.

Breaking the kiss, he stared at her pale face from up close, her eyes smudged with dark makeup. His hand still held her face, but his fingers slowly caressed down and pushed her long collar wide, reaching the skin of her neck.

"Master!" Komari grabbed his hands, fear in her eyes.

Arenval smiled; it was false, but he made it as genuine as possible. He wanted no emotions. But he had to use them to move Komari Vosa's mind, and perhaps heal her heart one intimate exchange at a time.

"Quiet. These scars bear witness to your strength, Komari. They are beautiful, part of you, and there is no need to hide them. They tried to break you, and these scars are proof that you prevailed."

Arenval pushed the collar down, not a lot; it was too rigid. But enough that he saw the skin of her neck and multiple small scars.

"Be proud, be strong, and be mine, Komari, my loyal apprentice."

"Yes, Master." She snappily replied with obsessive zeal.

Arenval smiled, and his one hand reached behind her head, long fingers combing through her short white hair. Meanwhile, his other arm curled around her narrow waist, feeling her naked back, then reached down and rested on the soft give of her bottom.

Physical touch was something Komari responded to positively. It was like an approval to her, like a positive reciprocation of her infatuation. It made her calm down and feel needed, an emotion likely to appear in a banished Jedi who knew nothing but the Order since toddlerhood.

"You will grow strong and mighty," Arenval said and pulled her in until her cheek was pressed against his chest. His hand on her bottom started to move, fingers gently kneading, making the touch more real.

Thankfully, they had not crossed 'that' line yet, and he was grateful she never tried it. He truly didn't know what effect it would have on his mind, and if Master Yoda and other Masters would notice the change.

Though this did have an effect on him. It was impossible to ignore while being a man.

"I have a mission for you, Komari," he whispered close to her ear.

"Anything, Master!" Komari looked up at his face, zealous devotion clear. There was delightful excitement all over her. "I will not disappoint you."

Arenval shifted both hands down behind her and clawed her cheeks while pulling her in, his fingers burning marks on her. "I know that, Komari."

He held her like that for a moment, letting Komari savor this moment. Weeks had gone by since their last meeting on Brentaal, and he reckoned she needed this motivation.

"I need you to go to Naboo." He stepped away from her at last, noticing the look of want on her face. But he didn't give any and continued to walk away until he was in front of an intact glass window. The view outside was dark, dirty, and smoggy.

"Is it to assassinate the Queen, my master?"

"Hah," he feigned a laugh, hiding the frown under it. "No. Queen Amidala has other uses later. Your task is to steal a ship. It belonged to a Sith Lord called Darth Maul. The fool died on Naboo. It's known as the Scimitar, heavily modified to function as a Sith Infiltrator. Its cloaking device is one of a kind, and I mean to have it if we are to build a fleet for ourselves someday. Take the ship, remove its transponder, and hide it somewhere secure."

"It will be done, Master."

Arenval turned to face her, the obsession still plain to see. "Do not go to Kohlma. The Bando Gora are doomed. Dooku has found a new master, a Sith Lord so powerful that I need time to prepare before confronting him. He and his master have had over a century to plan. We are only beginning."

"Dooku! He became a Sith? And he dared discard me!" Komari erupted again.

"Dooku is a fool. He abandoned the Jedi Order because of its corruption, only to kneel before its source. Make no mistake, he will come for you if you reveal yourself. You are not strong enough yet, my apprentice. Tread carefully on Naboo."

"What of here, my master? I have prepared everything as you wished," Komari asked, stepping closer to him. "They are ripe for slaughter!"

Ugh, her bloodlust needs some work.

"Do not worry. I can handle them alone. Their crimes are proven, and I'm certain the Order will send Master Vos eventually. I would rather he not find you," he said, resting a hand on her right shoulder.

"I will leave the Jedi Order within a few days. Find the names I gave you; they shall make a fine addition to our new Sect. I answer to neither the Rule of Two nor the dark side's temptations easily. We may be weak now, but our time will come."

By now, kill or be killed rule was clear to Arenval. The Jedi were blind, nor were they his enemy. His true enemy sat in the Chancellor's office, too strong for him to counter. Rich beyond belief, with resources of an entire Galactic Republic in his grasp.

Taking an unorthodox route was the only way to survive the coming Empire. However, what will replace that Empire, now that was Arenval's game to play.

"Leave now, Komari."

"Master..."

However, Komari didn't leave at his command. Instead, she stepped closer to him, her needy yellow eyes burning with desire. As her soft breasts pressed against him, her hands came up, and her fingers softly rubbed over his jaw, like cherishing something she obsessed over.

Arenval said nothing, staring back into her gaze. He was aroused; it was a physical reaction he couldn't fight.

"Mmmm~"

Arenval stood there stiffly, every muscle locked. Sexual release was technically permitted, but surrendering to pleasure was a dangerous line. If he were a true Jedi, it might have been safer.

But as a Dark Side creature, every emotion was a silent whisper.

He felt Komari's hands slide up to his neck, tracing the line of his jaw with her fingers before they drifted down his chest, then lower. Slowly, she squatted down on her toes, her toned thighs spreading wide under her loincloth, her hands rubbing slowly along his legs as she pressed her face shamelessly against the growing bulge under his robes.

"Master?"

Finally, Arenval looked down at her begging face, her eyes glazed with zealous madness, lips parted, cheeks flushed with need.

Deep breaths, Aren. You've done this before.

"Have your... reward."

He cringed inside at how the phrase landed, but it worked on her.

To Komari, this was the ultimate reward, the physical proof that her infatuation had borne fruit. She was no Sith with grand galactic ambitions; the Force was simply a tool for her hatred of Dooku and the Jedi Order that had cast her aside.

In that dimly lit room, Arenval watched the powerful Komari Vosa, over ten years his senior, frantically loosen his trousers. She trembled eagerly as she succeeded, letting the fabric drop to his feet.

Quickly, she parted his dark cloak and robes wide open, then pushed down his underwear with desperation. The moment his shaft sprang free, she smashed her face into it, nuzzling and worshiping the hard length like it was her sole focus.

She rubbed her face all over his cock; cheeks, nose, forehead, and lips sliding along the throbbing veins while keeping her hands planted on his thighs the entire time. She rolled and pressed her soft skin against him in fixation, deeply taking in his scent.

Arenval felt his pole twitch hard against her face. When she pressed a lingering kiss right to the swollen knob of his cock, the sudden rush of sensation forced him to clench his jaw. He had only done this once before in this body, and after eighteen years of celibacy, his new flesh reacted with embarrassing keenness.

Ugh... Help me, Force. She's taking her sweet time.

It was obscene to watch, the deadly Dark Jedi, squatting with her creamy thighs spread wide, rubbing her face, nose, and cheeks along the entire length of his fleshsaber, smearing his leaking precum across her pale skin while her short white hair brushed against his pelvis.

"Ummm."

But then it got worse. She dipped even lower and dragged her hot tongue across his heavy sack like they were ripe, dangling fruit. She drenched them thoroughly with long, wide licks before sucking one into her mouth, then the other. She rolled them gently with her tongue while her watery eyes stayed locked up toward him the entire time.

Fine, I'll praise you.

"You are doing well, Komari. But we do not have long. I can spare fifteen minutes to this on—"

Gluk!

Before he could finish the sentence, Komari's drooling mouth engulfed his throbbing cock in one plunge, rabidly choking herself down to the base.

The sudden, crushing tight throat muscles nearly knocked Arenval back, a lightning bolt of pleasure shooting up his spine and straight into his brain.

But he steeled himself, keeping only a faint, controlled smile on his lips. He didn't hate it; the sensations were incredible, her throat rippling around him like a hot massage, but it was too addictive. He would have preferred this anywhere but Coruscant. Brentaal had been far more relaxing.

Gluk! Gluk!

She's insane!

He gulped at the lewd sight. He considered himself well-endowed, yet Komari swallowed every veined inch. He watched her dark red lips stretch around the base of his shaft, face pressed flush against him. Her throat bobbed, gulping the pooling saliva within. Her eyes were wide open, already watering, yet shining with that same crazed devotion.

Seconds dragged on. His cock throbbed inside her spasming throat, completely drenched and constricted in that impossibly snug tunnel.

Don't you need to breathe?

More seconds passed, her choking noises grew more desperate. But her eyes never left his. Only then did realization hit him.

Oh, she wants that?

Quickly, Arenval grabbed her head with both hands and pushed her back, the movement disturbingly easy. She had surrendered all control to him without hesitation. So, he gave her exactly what she craved.

Perhaps it made her happy, this feeling of being controlled in such an intimate, degrading way. He could sense the fractures in her mind, the way the Dark Side had twisted her into this broken creature.

Slowly... maybe I can mend it.

Plap! Plap!

He started pumping into her mouth with intensity, controlling her head. The pleasure was dizzying, every thrust sending bliss racing through his veins. He pumped his hips forward to meet the rhythm of her head, driving himself hilt-deep with each powerful shove.

He ground into her face roughly a few times, holding her there as her nose pressed into his pubes and her short white hair turned messy, strands sticking to her forehead with spit. However, he could still see her dreamy eyes only grew more lust-drunk with every second.

Uh... Close!

He released her head and let her take over again, gasping. Meanwhile, he leaned down, stretching one hand lower.

"Let us end this sooner."

"Let... meh... Master," Komari interrupted suddenly, pulling her mouth off his glistening cock for just a second, strings of thick saliva connecting her lips to his throbbing shaft, before she dove back down with hunger.

Both her hands reached behind her neck and untied the fastenings of her backless top. The moment the fabric loosened, it fell away. Her large, round breasts bounced free into the red-tinged lighting around them.

They're... interesting.

They were larger than he expected. Full and perfectly round with almost no sag, capped with pale cherry nipples that were shockingly pierced. They were small, dark, teasing as they swayed with her breathing. This was the first time he had seen them.

Is it giving in to temptation if I want to touch them?

The thought lingered in his mind for several seconds. Then, before he could stop himself, his right hand reached down and caught one greedily. The soft, warm flesh filled his palm like a cloud, so plush his fingers sank deep.

He squeezed harder, and it spilled between his digits, yielding just like its owner. They felt like warm dough, so soft on his calloused hands.

He stared down at her face; her mouth stuffed full of his cock, eyes locked on his with feverish worship and submission. The words slipped out before he could stop, because in that moment they were simply true. No matter the torture she'd faced, the denials and tribulations. It was a fact.

"You're beautiful."

For some reason, Komari's eyes widened even further, blown wide with pure euphoric bliss. Her entire body jittered and trembled for a long moment, her mouth halting mid-thrust around his swollen cock.

"Mmm..." She pulled back slowly. "I'm honored... my master."

Gluk!

She immediately dove back down with a frenzy, fucking her own face harder and deeper onto his cock than before. Her throat convulsed around his flesh rod, sloppy choking sounds echoing as she forced herself to the hilt again and again, nose smashing into his crotch with obsessive need for more, no matter the sticky mess.

By then, Arenval was dangerously close, pleasure coiling at the base of his spine.

"Gaaaah... Take it... Open your mouth."

He pulled his throbbing cock free from her greedy throat and stroked the pulsing shaft rapidly, keeping the swollen cockhead hovering just above her eagerly stretched-out tongue.

Then it hit. Ropes of pent-up white cream erupted from him. The first heavy spurt landed across the bridge of her nose, the next splattered into her short white hair, and the rest poured messily onto her waiting mouth. It dripped down her chin in sticky drops and rolled onto her heaving breasts.

He kept jerking through every pulse, pumping out every last drop, painting her face and tits in glossy streaks of his batter. Finally he pressed the sensitive tip firmly against her parted lips.

Komari immediately formed a perfect, hungry 'O' around it and suckled, milking the last weak spurts straight onto her tongue while her eyes rolled back in delirious satisfaction.

I'm calm. I'm not tempted. I'm calm.

Arenval kept conditioning his mind while picking up his trousers and making himself proper.

It's for both of us. She would have died.

He stepped away, ignoring her as much as he could. Seeing her scoop the mess from her breasts and face to lick clean was... thrilling. He couldn't take the risk. He didn't fear attachment as it was under control, but the addiction to sexual pleasure.

"I shall reward you properly once I've left the Order," he said. "And when that time comes, I want you without that collar."

"Yes! Yes, my master!" Komari beamed, getting up at last and tying back her top.

Seeing she had stopped panting, he nodded. "Go now. Be careful on Naboo. May the Force be with you."

"And with you, Master," she replied and merrily vanished back into the room she had come out of.

At last, alone, he let out a deep, long breath. He looked for the nearest rotting chair and sat down, closing his eyes.

I need to get used to this.

Komari was a special case, however. He knew for certain that the other Dark Jedi and similar won't be easy to win over. Komari's core inner conflict was about being rejected for her fixation; hence, winning her over through stroking that emotion helped.

He doubted others, who were driven by more sinister fates, would be this easy.

Finally, he sorted his mind out and glanced at the door Komari had entered.

Forgive me for using you like this, Komari. I will find a way to heal you once I've escaped my prison.

Then, he gripped his unignited lightsaber in right hand and left the building.

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Naboo, Chommel Sector,

“One with the Force, Qui-Gon is.”

The pyre burned. However, there was no body on top of it, just empty robes that were left behind. They did, however, find the lower half of Darth Maul’s body, cut apart.

"Padawan Tython's Force vision was true," Mace Windu said, cloaked in a hood, blankly staring at the fire. "The Sith have returned. There is no doubt."

Yoda nodded, also staring at the fire. “Hmm, always two there are. No more, no less. A master and an apprentice.”

"Padawan Tython will hold the Council responsible for this," Mace Windu said. "We must return and speak with him before it is too late. He was the last to speak with Qui-Gon on Coruscant. He must be feeling helpless and... furious."

“Right, he was,” Yoda replied solemnly. “Release him, I must. His prison, the Temple must not become.”

“This matter should be discussed in the Council. Now is not the time to let him roam. With a Sith Lord still at large, Padawan Tython would make an ideal apprentice.”

Yoda shook his head. “Weak, he is not. Fight the dark side, he can. Learned much from him, I have.”

Yoda felt Mace Windu’s gaze linger on him. He knew what many in the Council felt. That he was too close and fond of his Padawan. That his judgment was clouded because of it.

“Meditate, I will.”